

# Report: Effects of climate change on Indigenous peoples, lands and culture

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Researchers from the Institute of Tribal Environmental Professionals this week launched the State of Tribes and Climate Change (STACC) report, which examines the disproportionate effect climate change has

on Indigenous lands and people and the added strain tribes experience as they respond to damaging climate events, which are increasing in frequency and severity.

The STACC report builds on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, released Aug. 9. ITEP, which is a tribal institute at Northern Arizona University, brought together more than 90 authors representing diverse entities and perspectives to create this report, which includes not only research into the effects of [climate change](#) but also the voices of Indigenous people who are on the front lines in experiencing and responding to [climate](#) disasters.

This report is the first of its kind to be produced in the United States.

"We wanted to change the discourse in this arena and ensure the tribes had their voices and recommendations amplified," said Ann Marie Chischilly, ITEP director and interim vice president of the Office of Native American Initiatives at NAU. "It's my hope that the [federal government](#) and its partners will take this report and support tribes more directly."

ITEP's Tribes & Climate Change Program spearheaded this report by convening the author team including 34 Tribal authors who provided personal narratives. Nikki Cooley, the climate program's co-manager, testified in front of the U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis in July and shared key findings and recommendations from the STACC report. Those findings include the need for greater meaningful participation of Native American and Alaska Native researchers and communities in future climate assessments as well as looking more closely at the on-the-ground work tribes are doing every day.

"Tribes are investing efforts in adaptation planning and projects to keep their communities, ecosystems and people healthy," she said. "In doing

so, they are implementing the most cutting-edge work on climate. Tribal nations are actively creating climate vulnerability assessments, adaptation plans and hazard mitigation plans. Protecting traditional knowledge is an important part of these processes. Locally relevant and regionally specific information is needed to understand local climate impacts and develop solutions that incorporate local, traditional and western knowledge for holistic solutions."

In making decisions about protecting land, air and water, governments should work with tribal nations and support their sovereignty and self-determination in protecting these resources. Such collaboration also will inform governments about Indigenous peoples' worldviews, which center relationality, responsibility and reciprocity. Collaborations need to address the sacred and communal nature of resources.

"I stress the importance of acknowledging the unique challenges Native American and Alaska Native villages face when it comes to the climate crisis," Cooley said. "Many of our people live in rural and underserved areas where they have little to no access to water, food and emergency services. The lack of infrastructure on most tribal communities is increasing the stress on the people, natural environment and the costs of maintaining."

The STACC report also will be cited in an Indigenous peoples section in the North America chapter of the sixth IPCC Assessment Report, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* that will be published in February.

**More information:** Status of Tribes and Climate Change Working Group (STACCWG). (2021). Status of Tribes and Climate Change Report, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ. [nau.edu/stacc2021](https://nau.edu/stacc2021)

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